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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 4167  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 7055  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5531  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0827  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 4686  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 3041  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 5740  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 2139  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 0444  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2227  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 001846

SIPDIS

////COLLECTIVE ADDED//////////

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/02/2017

TAGS: PGOV PK PREL

SUBJECT: RED MOSQUE (LAL MASJID) STAND-OFF OFFICIALLY OVER

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 1647

1B. ISLAMABAD 1688  
1C. ISLAMABAD 1698

ISLAMABAD 00001846 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Charge Peter Bodde 1.5 (b), (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The stand-off between the Government and the Jamia Hafsa women's madrassa officially ended the night of April 24. Pakistan Muslim League President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain toured the madrassa and confirmed the students there had met all the government's demands. The government, in turn, agreed not to destroy more mosques without first consulting with affected communities and agreed to "enforce sharia law," which in this controversy has become a euphemism for anti-vice and anti-pornography laws. Musharraf's and Shujaat's willingness to ignore daily calls from opposition parties and from the press to "enforce the writ of the state" ultimately allowed the crisis to end without bloodshed. End Summary.

THE STAND-OFF OFFICIALLY ENDS

12. (C) Pakistan Muslim League President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain told us April 25 that all outstanding disagreements between the women of Jamia Hafsa and the Government of Pakistan were resolved. Shujaat had toured the madrassa the night before and seen no men, militants, weapons, or swagger sticks (batons). He also confirmed that the children's library adjacent to the madrassa -- site of a months-long sit-in -- was open to the public. In short, the madrassa had met all of the government's demands.

13. (C) Shujaat complained that the press had sensationalized and misreported the Red Mosque story from the beginning. Coverage of the controversy's denouement was no

different. Headlines claimed that the government had agreed to "enforce sharia law," but what the women had actually demanded was enforcement of existing laws against pornography, prostitution, and other crimes.

#### WHO'S INSIDE THE MADRASSA

14. (C) Shujaat told us he was shocked by the number of children and teenagers in the madrassa. He claimed that the security and police services, when briefing him on possible methods of ending the stand-off through force, had not reported the significant number of children in the building. Shujaat had spoken to many of the girls during his tour; most of them were orphans or children of destitute parents.

#### SHUJAAT: THE GOVERNMENT CAUSED THIS UNNECESSARILY

15. (C) Shujaat said he would not represent the government again in negotiations with the madrassa or mosque. He believed the government had behaved "stupidly" from the beginning of the crisis. The precipitating event of the stand-off -- the government's demolition of mosques built without permits -- should not have occurred without consulting the affected communities, especially since some of the mosques had been built decades earlier. Shujaat also complained about the April 16 low-level helicopter surveillance of the mosque, which had offended the residents' conservative sensibilities. Shujaat suspected that, in both cases, relatively junior decision makers had acted rashly in an effort to "stand up to the mullahs." Senior government officials would have been more circumspect, according to Shujaat.

#### THE LAW AND ORDER VACUUM -- AND WHAT FILLS IT

16. (C) Shujaat noted that the entire Jamia Hafsa saga was a metaphor for the law and order problems facing Pakistan. The

ISLAMABAD 00001846 002.2 OF 002

press criticized the government's failure to enforce the writ of the state inside the madrassa and mosque, but the cause of the controversy's escalation was the state's refusal to enforce basic laws in the mosque's neighborhood. (Note: On March 27, Jamia Hafsa women kidnapped three prostitutes and a child from a brothel near the Red Mosque and held the kidnappees in the madrassa for several days. The madrassa students told the press they took action only after the police repeatedly told mosque officials they would not shut down the brothel, which was located on a small street of tiny row houses. About 40 families lived on the street, and all had signed petitions requesting the police close the brothel; the police had also ignored those petitions. End Note.)

17. (C) While he was visiting Jamia Hafsa, Shujaat met with two women who recently took refuge in the mosque. The two, aged 17 and 19, were raped two months ago by an "influential man" in Jelhum, Punjab. After the police refused to file charges against the rapist, the girls fled to Jamia Hafsa. The madrassa has since issued press releases noting the failure of the state to seek justice. Shujaat met with the two young women on April 24. He confidentially told us that the older one is pregnant from the rape. During his meeting with us, he returned to the young women's plight several times, and was clearly upset by the situation. As we left, he told us he was working on "making sure the state seeks justice for those girls."

18. (C) Comment: Shujaat has a reputation for being the PML-Q's ruthless political enforcer. Throughout the Red Mosque controversy, though, we have found him to be concerned about the well-being of the girls and women inside the madrassa and committed first and foremost to resolving the stand-off with no violence. The press -- which has been sensationalist and less-than-transparent throughout this saga -- may very well report tomorrow that Shujaat "caved to the

mullahs" by agreeing to reexamine the mosque destruction issue and by promising to enforce anti-vice laws. The reality, though, is that President Musharraf's and Shujaat's waiting out the controversy averted a potential human tragedy and political crisis.

BODDE